

Women in Digital

The future is about digital powering the European economies and the world. Women account for more than half of the European population but only around 17% of the ICT specialists are women. Women's active participation is crucial in order to shape a sustainable, fair and equitable digital economy and society.



European Commission

Women in Digital

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More Women in Digital

Women are under-represented in the Digital Economy

- 53% of companies trying to recruit ICT specialists report difficulties in finding qualified people.
- Only 1 in 3 Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) graduates is a woman.
- Only 17% - 1 in 6 - ICT specialists in the EU is a woman.
- Women working in ICT earn almost 20% less than men do.
- Only 19% of European ICT entrepreneurs are women.
- 93% of capital invested in European companies this year went to all-male founding teams.

Why is it important to include more women in Digital?

Digital is shaping the world around us. Technology is used to provide education, services and jobs. We buy and pay our bills online and we use the internet to stay in touch with our loved ones. Both men and women use digital technologies and need to be involved in building our digital future.

Research shows that more diverse teams lead to better decision-making and more innovative products and services, which are good for company performance, business and economic progress.

Moreover, Europe's digital future includes big data, robotics, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and the internet of things. There is currently a lack of around 1 million digital specialists. Recruiting more women will help meet Europe's increasing demand for digital experts.

What are the challenges?

Despite a growing demand for digital specialists, few girls and women study science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) - often a precursor for a career in the digital sector. Many of those women that enter the digital sector move to other careers. Diversity can boost innovation. Even though studies show that female-led startups are more likely to succeed than all-male startups, there is very slow growth in the percentage of female entrepreneurs in the digital sector. There is a large gender pay gap and it can be difficult for women to reach managerial and decision-making positions in the digital sector. Europe is experiencing a shortage of around one million digital experts. 53% of enterprises trying to recruit ICT specialists report difficulties in getting qualified people. It is essential to encourage more women to participate in the digital economy to tackle this challenge. There are gender bias and stereotypes both in real life and in the media. Specialists working with tech and digital are often pictured as men. There is also a lack of role models to inspire girls and women to study STEM and work as digital specialists. Gender-based online violence may restrict women's participation in societal debates, their influence in politics, and undermine representative democratic processes. Women's online presence, free from fear and hatred, should equally be ensured.

The women in Digital Strategy - Empowering women to play a more active role

The Commission's Women in Digital strategy focuses on encouraging and empowering women to play a more active role in the digital age. Women's involvement and active participation is indispensable for a sustainable, fair and equitable economy and society. The strategy focuses on three areas:

1. Promoting digital skills and education

- Digital Opportunity Traineeships* : The EU sponsors young Europeans to be trainees in companies
- Codeweek*: Trains thousands of girls to code every year
- Scoreboard on Women in Digital*
- European Network of Women in Digital*
- Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition* : The Coalition brings together Member States, companies, social partners, non-profit organisations and education providers who take concrete actions to tackle the lack of Digital skills in Europe

2. Challenging digital gender stereotypes

- Digital Skills Awards* : Annual awards to recognise and promote role models
- No Women No Panel Campaign*
- Cooperation with Audiovisual regulators* - A report was published by the European Platform for Audiovisual Regulators (EPRA) about the representation of women in media (on- and Off-screen) with constructive recommendations.

3. Advocating for more women entrepreneurs

- Startup Europe* recognises and promotes women-led startups
- WE Hubs* - network to help female entrepreneurs in the digital sector
- EU prize for women innovators* recognises and rewards top women innovators
- CEO Declaration on closing the digital gender gap in high-tech companies*

The Commission works with the Member States of which 27 have signed the EU Women in Digital Declaration to encourage women to play an active and prominent role in the digital technology sector. The EU countries will work closely with the public and private sectors and civil society to improve gender equality in tech. The Commission's #DigitalRespect4Her campaign raises awareness about online violence and the difficulties women face online such as threats, stalking, intimidation, objectification and undermining of their professional work or their presence in the public sphere. This often discourages them from participating in important online conversations and engaging in politics, which should be an arena of everyone's voices. Everyone is encouraged to share their story or support the campaign on social media through #DigitalRespect4Her.

To monitor progress, we have launched the Women in Digital Scoreboard, which is part of Digital Economy and Society Index and the European semester reports as of 2019. The scoreboard assesses Member States' performance in the areas of internet use and digital skills, as well as specialist skills and employment based on thirteen indicators.

Sharing best practices in Europe

The European Commission recognises successful initiatives that have the potential to be replicated across Europe, including through the European Digital Skills Awards and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition repository of best practices, which highlight outstanding projects across the EU. The Awards have a category targeting digital skills for girls and women.

Winners of Digital Skills Awards, Digital Skills for Girls and Women

2018

#Hackeuses is a sixweek training course run by Simplon that is reserved for women of all profiles,

background and ages. During the course, the participants learn the basics of web programming with the objective of training for a job in the digital sector.

Simplon website

2017

IT for She supports a new generation of women to start careers in the IT and technology sectors. Four elements make up IT for She. Its annual Women in Tech camp provides programming workshops for top female ICT students. In Kids in IT, female volunteers teach coding and technology to 1,000 children in small towns each year. Leading technology companies also provide mentors to coach young women for hightech careers. The fourth and most recent element is the Perspektywy Women in Tech Summit which was held for the first time in 2018. It is organised by Perspektywy, a Polish Foundation that promotes women's participation in science, technology and mathematics.

IT for She website

Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition Best Practice

Rails Girls Sofia is making technology more approachable for women in Bulgaria. The programme runs free, two-day workshops for women and girls on the basics of Ruby on Rails, a programming framework used to develop web applications. Aimed at women with zero or minimal programming and technology experience, Rails Girls aims to make learning fun, exciting and useful. The programme is part of the global Rails Girls community, which fosters technology skills among women.

Rails Girls Sofia website

We need to join forces to get more girls and women active and working in Digital

Getting more girls interested in science, technology, engineering and maths as well as attracting women to digital roles is a collective challenge, which requires robust and decisive action at all levels – from parents, educators, policy makers, political leaders and social partners to entrepreneurs, cities, regions, Member States and the European Union. Collective action and investments also need to cut across different policy areas and touch on policies in education, the labour market, social welfare, inclusion, justice, research, taxation and competitiveness. Women's involvement and active participation is an indispensable ingredient for a sustainable, fair and equitable digital economy and society.

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